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Strengthening of the coordination of humanitarian and disaster relief assistance of the United Nations, including special economic assistance: strengthening of the coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance of the United Nations

Letter dated 17 December 2012 from the Permanent Representatives of Qatar and Turkey to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

We have the honour to enclose herewith the recommendations of the first International Conference on the HOPEFOR initiative (see annex I) and the conclusions of the second International Conference on the HOPEFOR initiative, including the panel outcomes (see annex II), adopted in Doha on 29 November 2011 and in Antalya, Turkey, on 30 November 2012, respectively. The initiative and the Conferences aimed to improve the effectiveness and coordination of military and civil defence assets for natural disaster response.

We kindly request your assistance in circulating the present letter and its annexes as a document of the General Assembly, under agenda item 70 (a).

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Annex I to the letter dated 17 December 2012 from the Permanent Representatives of Qatar and Turkey to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Recommendations of the First International Conference on the HOPEFOR initiative to enhance the effectiveness and coordination of the use of military and civil defence assets for natural disaster response, held from 27 to 29 November 2011 in Doha

Preamble

The State of Qatar, the Dominican Republic and the Republic of Turkey have endorsed the HOPEFOR initiative in the context of promoting civil-military coordination at the international and regional levels and the effective use of military and civil defence assets in natural disaster response.

The HOPEFOR initiative was initially launched by His Excellency Sheikh Hamad bin Jassim bin Jabr Al-Thani, Prime Minister and Foreign Minister of the State of Qatar, in June 2010 in New York, aiming at improving the use of military and civil defence assets in relief operations.

Notable calls have also been made for a more effective and needs-based response to natural disasters, most prominently by His Excellency Dr. Leonel Fernandez, President of the Dominican Republic, and His Excellency Abdullah Gül, President of the Republic of Turkey, at the general debate of the General Assembly on 23 September 2010. Qatar, the Dominican Republic and the Republic of Turkey decided to join efforts in presenting the HOPEFOR initiative and initiating a process of reflection on improving the effectiveness and coordination of military and civil defence assets for natural disaster response within the context of the United Nations and its membership.

After officially launching the initiative, several in-depth consultations have taken place with Member States and a wide range of stakeholders to further refine the HOPEFOR initiative and propose tangible options and results.

On 21 February 2011, the Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of the State of Qatar addressed the President of the sixty-fifth session of the General Assembly on the steps taken regarding the HOPEFOR initiative (A/65/772). The background paper entitled "HOPEFOR initiative: a global cooperative framework to improve the effectiveness of military and civil defence assets in relief operations", prepared by Qatar in consultation with the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, was then shared among the wider membership of the United Nations.

In preparation for the Doha International Conference, Qatar, the Dominican Republic and Turkey co-organized a workshop on the HOPEFOR initiative in June 2012, with the participation of civil-military coordination experts drawn from States, United Nations humanitarian organizations, regional organizations and non-governmental organizations. The overall objective of the workshop was to discuss and refine the options listed in the initial background paper with a view to informing the expert consultations during the conference.

The General Assembly, at its sixty-fifth session, adopted resolution 65/307 on 1 July 2011 entitled "Improving the effectiveness and coordination of military and civil defence assets for natural disaster response", which was presented by the State

of Qatar, the Dominican Republic and the Republic of Turkey with the co-sponsorship of other Member States. In paragraph 6 of the resolution, the General Assembly "takes note with interest of the decision of Qatar, the Dominican Republic and Turkey to co-convene an international conference, to be held in Doha in 2011, to discuss the concept of the HOPEFOR initiative and consider the options outlined in the paper thereon and steps for their implementation, as appropriate, in close collaboration with Member States, regional and international organizations and the Emergency Relief Coordinator". By the resolution, the Assembly reaffirmed the principles of neutrality, humanity, impartiality and independence for the provision of humanitarian assistance, emphasized the fundamentally civilian character of humanitarian assistance, and reaffirmed the need in situations of natural disaster in which military capacity and assets are used to support the implementation of humanitarian assistance, for such use to be undertaken with the consent of the affected State and in conformity with international law, including international humanitarian law, as well as humanitarian principles.

In response to the will of many countries and organizations to further the dialogue on the options outlined in the background paper on the HOPEFOR initiative, and in order to emphasize the involvement of all international and regional partners with a view to formulating the implementation steps, the first International Conference on the HOPEFOR initiative to enhance the effectiveness and coordination of the use of military and civil defence assets for natural disaster response was held from 27 to 29 November 2011 in Doha.

The Conference reiterated the need to more actively promote a common understanding of and respect for the core humanitarian principles and the principled engagement in disaster response. Delegates also reaffirmed the importance of ensuring that military and civil defence assets to support humanitarian assistance are needs-based, appropriate, complementary to the humanitarian response operations, timely, unique in capability and availability (last resort), and in conformity with international law and humanitarian principles, as well as international guidelines, such as the Oslo Guidelines, the military and civil defence assets guidelines, international disaster response laws and country/context-specific guidance, where present.

The participants in the Conference discussed in depth all of the topics listed in workshops and panels, notably on training and doctrine, operational capacity, preparedness and prevention, strengthening networks of personnel and the creation of a regional centre of excellence with the aim of increasing the effectiveness of the appropriate use of military and civil defence assets to support humanitarian operations. They also took into account previous initiatives and regional and international experiences in this context.

The Conference reiterated its support for the mandate of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and the key role it plays in the international humanitarian response system in mobilizing and coordinating effective and principled humanitarian assistance.

After a careful study of the mechanisms within the United Nations system for the response to natural disasters, and the commendation of the significant role played by the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator and the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs in support for the HOPEFOR initiative, the Conference adopted the recommendations below.

Strengthening of existing institutional systems and frameworks and areas for cooperation

The Conference stresses the need to strengthen institutional systems and frameworks at the local, regional and international levels and emphasizes the need for effective cooperation and more efficient coordination in the response to natural disasters, including response to environmental and technological consequences, while reiterating that the primary role and responsibility in disaster response lies with the affected State.

The Conference recommends the following:

1. The promotion of international, regional and subregional coordination mechanisms to promote the effective use of foreign military and civil defence assets in response to natural disasters in support of existing international structures, while respecting national ownership and leadership;

2. The strengthening of the existing strategic coordination mechanisms, particularly the Consultative Group on the Use of the Military and Civil Defence Assets, through regional meetings and further working groups, and exploration of the formalization of structures, to include the addition of a board structure within the Consultative Group and the enhancement of regional and subregional representation;

3. The development of a sustainable mechanism for operational regional civil-military coordination, communication and cooperation in support of the existing international response system among all actors in the field through the organization of training, conferences and international, regional and subregional meetings;

4. The development of innovative measures and procedures to ensure a more effective use of military and civil defence assets (requesting and providing procedures for such assets) taking into account the humanitarian principles, the Good Humanitarian Donorship initiative, the principles of last resort and the needs-based use of military and civil defence assets in all phases of relief operations in response to natural disasters, with the participation of international actors in support of local and national authorities;

5. The promotion of the further dissemination and implementation of the Oslo Guidelines to humanitarian and military actors at the international, regional and national levels;

6. The establishment of new and, where appropriate, the integration of existing regional and subregional databases for the inventory, monitoring and documentation of military and civil defence assets, teams and individual expertise suitable for use in disaster response operations, and facilitation of their engagement in a principled and coordinated manner, according to national practice and applicable national laws and regulations;

7. The development of procedures for the timely deployment and integration of purpose-trained civil-military coordination/liaison officers in support of the United Nations humanitarian coordination system in humanitarian response operations;

8. The establishment of a roster of qualified civil-military coordination personnel capable of operating at the national and regional levels in natural disaster response operations;

9. Support through regional centres of excellence for the development and dissemination of national doctrines, standard operational procedures and legal status agreements for the use, request and deployment of military and civil defence assets and the coordination of these assets in natural disaster response in order to facilitate national, regional and international response operations;

10. Support for the upgrade and update of handbooks of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs on civil-military coordination in an inclusive and participatory manner with interested Member States and humanitarian organizations to adapt these handbooks to regional needs and realities;

11. An invitation to the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, with the support of interested States, international and intergovernmental organizations and civil society, to conduct a thorough study with the ultimate goal of identifying further gaps and providing recommendations on enhancing the effectiveness of civil-military coordination and operations. This study could serve as a follow-up to the study commissioned by the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs entitled *The Effectiveness of Foreign Military Assets in Natural Disaster Response*, conducted by the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute in 2008, and incorporate recent experiences from large-scale disasters that would assist in informing decision-making and policymaking, as well as developing practical solutions to increase the effectiveness of employing military and civil-defence assets. Central to this recommendation is the creation of an advisory committee representing regional and subregional interests to steer the direction of the study and determine resourcing requirements;

12. The continued inclusion of the options of the HOPEFOR initiative and the implementation of the recommendations of this Conference in the agenda of the Consultative Group on the Use of Military and Civil Defence Assets and other relevant regional and international forums according to applicable rules of procedure.

Capacity-building and preparedness

The Conference stresses the need to improve national, regional and international capacities by encouraging cooperation between centres of excellence and the establishment of centres of excellence in all regions, as appropriate, and commends in this context the integration of experiences of the existing regional and national centres of excellence.

The Conference recommends the following:

1. The development of practical applications to serve as a model for civil-military coordination in support of the existing international framework;

2. The promotion of cooperation and partnerships among international, regional and subregional centres of excellence in order to benefit from expertise, resources and the exchange of information, and to contribute to the strengthening and expansion of the network of practitioners in the field of humanitarian civil-military coordination;

3. The encouragement of dialogue, cooperation and understanding between humanitarian and military practitioners on the ground for the optimal use of military and civil defence assets in response to natural disasters;

4. Work on strengthening preparedness capacities through the creation of structures and utilization of equipment and through international and regional early warning systems to support the use of military and civil defence assets and improve their response to natural disasters;

5. The collection, documentation, and dissemination of best practices to guide decision-making, policy development and operations;

6. The consolidation and dissemination of concepts, competencies and principles in civil-military coordination among civilian and military personnel and specialists in support of internationally recognized values and principles, including through jointly developed civilian and military simulation exercises;

7. The further promotion of collaboration between States, regional organizations, and international humanitarian organizations with a view to enhancing capacity-building actions and the development of national, subregional and regional doctrines and databases.

The Conference commends the announcement by His Excellency Sheikh Hamad bin Jassim bin Jabr Al-Thani, Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs of the State of Qatar for the establishment of a centre of excellence based in Doha and the intention of the State of Qatar to develop the implementation strategies, actions and legal options for the establishment of the centre, as well as the follow-up and coordination. The centre can serve as a platform for the common understanding of principled, effective and coordinated use of military and civil defence assets and for training, joint simulation exercises, doctrine development, policy dialogue and the sharing of regional experiences and best practices.

The Conference welcomes the call by the State of Qatar, the Dominican Republic and Turkey to organize regional meetings and workshops to continue consultation, cooperation and coordination regionally and subregionally, which can be a basis for strengthening the effective use of military and civil defence assets in support of existing international coordination efforts, and invites all other regions to convene similar workshops.

The Conference requests the co-sponsors to inform the General Assembly in its current session on the outcome of the Conference in response to resolution 65/307, and encourages the Assembly to constructively continue the dialogue on the recommendations.

The participants express their appreciation to the State of Qatar for hosting the International Conference on the HOPEFOR initiative to enhance the effectiveness and coordination of the use of military and civil defence assets for natural disaster response, and for providing all necessary support to make it a success. They also thank all Member States that co-sponsored resolution 65/307. They express pleasure and look forward to the organization of the next landmark event within the HOPEFOR frameworks to be held in the Republic of Turkey in early 2012.

They also express their appreciation to the Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs for the significant role it played in reaching a consensus on the recommendations of this Conference.

Annex II to the letter dated 17 December 2012 from the Permanent Representatives of Qatar and the Turkey to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Conclusions of the Second International HOPEFOR Conference, held from 28 to 30 November 2012 in Antalya, Turkey

Preamble

At the sixty-fifth session of the General Assembly, the President of the Republic of Turkey suggested the establishment of a "global rapid reaction capability" to effectively tackle the negative effects of disasters by utilizing military assets for disaster relief. The President of the Dominican Republic made a call to Member States suggesting that countries at risk work together to determine best practices on disaster relief operations. Both of the above calls endorsed and supported the initiative that was already announced by the Prime Minister of the State of Qatar in 2010.

The Republic of Turkey, the State of Qatar and the Dominican Republic have launched the HOPEFOR initiative, which aims to promote civil-military coordination at the international and regional levels and the effective use of military and civil defence assets in disaster response.

After the workshop organized by the three countries and the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs in June 2011 in New York, the General Assembly, at its sixty-fifth session, adopted resolution 65/307 on 1 July 2011 entitled "Improving the effectiveness and coordination of military and civil defence assets for natural disaster response", in which Member States, inter alia, recognized the importance of the initiative.

The first international conference co-organized by Qatar, Turkey and the Dominican Republic convened in Doha from 27 to 29 November 2011 with a view to discussing the concept of the HOPEFOR initiative and considering the options outlined in the background paper of Qatar and steps for their implementation.

International Conference on the HOPEFOR initiative

At the end of the first Conference, the participants made the recommendations below.

Strengthening of existing institutional systems and frameworks and areas for cooperation

The Conference stresses the need to strengthen institutional systems and frameworks at the local, regional and international levels and emphasizes the need for effective cooperation and more efficient coordination in the response to natural disasters, including to environmental and technological consequences, while reiterating that the primary role and responsibility in disaster response lies with the affected State.

Capacity-building and preparedness

The Conference stresses the need to improve national, regional and international capacities by encouraging cooperation between centres of excellence and the establishment of centres of excellence in all regions, as appropriate, and commends in this context the integration of experiences of the existing regional and national centres of excellence.

Objectives of the Second International HOPEFOR Conference

The Conference, organized by the Prime Ministry's Disaster and Emergency Management Presidency under the auspices of the Presidency of the Republic of Turkey, convened in Antalya from 28 to 30 November 2012.

The Conference was built upon the theoretical discussions and recommendations of the First HOPEFOR Conference, convened in Doha on the effective coordination of military and civil defence assets in support of disaster response operations.

Three panels provided the participants with the opportunity to elaborate on the conference objectives, aimed at developing the initiative in practical terms (see enclosure):

- To discuss examples on the operational implementation of civil-military coordination in natural disaster cases, including examples of best practices of operational civil-military cooperation and/or coordination in different disaster cases at the national, regional and international levels
- To share different experiences of civil-military coordination at the stages of preparedness and response, including civil-military cooperation and/or coordination in the preparedness phase to natural disasters
- To explore ways to enhance the civil-military coordination at the regional, subregional and international levels, including effective coordination of military and civil defence assets at all levels.

The reports on the outcomes of the three panels constitute an integral part of the conclusions of the Second International HOPEFOR Conference.

Recommendations

The Second International HOPEFOR Conference, in line with the in-depth and fruitful discussions held during the three panels, agreed on the below recommendations to the international community.

First, Member States are encouraged to bring their national legislations in line with the principles and concepts contained in the Oslo Guidelines.

One of the main obstacles on the use of the military and civil defence assets identified by the Conference is the inapplicability of a unique model of legislation. In most cases, the Oslo Guidelines are implemented as a model. However, there are incidents when national legislations conflict with the concept and principles of the Oslo Guidelines, resulting in the loss of valuable response time.

Therefore, the Conference deems it vital for Member States to adapt their legislations in line with the Oslo Guidelines with a view to allowing military and

civil defence assets to conduct their international operations in a timely manner to save lives and provide assistance to the most needy.

The Conference invites Members States that have the intention to develop or revise their legislations to consult with and seek guidance from the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs.

Second, Member States are encouraged to establish national military and civil defence assets teams.

The Conference notes that many Member States have the capacity and ability to address the results of disasters occurring in their territory with national military and civil defence assets teams, which operate in full coordination with or as an integral part of national emergency management systems.

The Conference also takes note of the fact that, in most countries, the national teams consist of separate military and civil defence assets. It recommends the establishment of national military and civil defence assets teams in order to increase the efficiency and coordination of these assets in addressing the immediate results of natural disasters.

The Conference invites Member States that plan to establish military and civil defence assets teams to seek advice from the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs in defining the basic standards and skill sets for such teams. It also appreciates the offer by the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs to provide training expertise and guidance in this regard.

Third, Member States are encouraged to create cadres of trained pools of civil-military coordination experts at the regional and subregional levels who are available to deploy, when required, to assist in the coordination of domestic, bilateral, and foreign military and civil defence assets on behalf of the affected State and the international humanitarian community.

In large-scale disasters, especially those that affect a large part of the population, international assistance is vital to save lives. In most cases, it becomes challenging for the affected State(s) to coordinate the often overwhelming amount of incoming assistance and aid providers. In these cases, the field-level experience of military and civil defence assets experts and practitioners would provide international coordination expertise in support of the affected Government.

However, recent large-scale disasters have proved that the current international capacity should be strengthened with such expertise and practice on the ground.

Therefore, the Conference recommends the creation of a cadre of Member State focal points for immediate triggering of the deployment of national and foreign military and civil defence assets teams and assets, when required, to be in a position to reach the disaster-affected areas, on behalf of the affected Government and the international humanitarian community.

Fourth, Member States are encouraged to establish international/regional/subregional civil-military centres for excellence and of a worldwide network linking the centres.

The Conference takes note of the utility of the existing regional civil-military centres of/for excellence to provide the international community with the capability of obtaining best practices and understanding in responding to natural disasters.

Welcoming the decision of the State of Qatar, the Republic of Turkey and the Dominican Republic to establish centres of excellence, it also invites Member States to establish additional centres for excellence, in particular as joint regional efforts, and to harmonize activities among existing centres with regard to studies, meetings, workshops and training on military and civil defence assets, in coordination with the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs.

Closing remarks

The Conference requests the co-sponsors to inform the General Assembly at its current session on the outcomes of the conferences held in Doha in 2011 and in Antalya in 2012 in response to resolution 65/307, and encourages the Assembly to constructively continue the dialogue on the recommendations.

The participants express their appreciation to the Republic of Turkey for hosting the International Conference on the HOPEFOR initiative to enhance the effectiveness and coordination of the use of military and civil defence assets for natural disaster response and for providing all the necessary support to make it a success.

They also thank all Member States who co-sponsored resolution 65/307.

The Conference participants look forward to the organization of the Third International Conference on the HOPEFOR initiative, to be held in the Dominican Republic in 2013.

Enclosure

Panel 1: examples of best practices of operational civil-military cooperation and/or coordination in different disaster cases at the national and international levels

Main outcomes and recommendations

1. The institutionalization of lessons learned and best practices is of great help in preparing for future responses, more so in disaster-prone countries having to deal with recurring emergencies.

2. There is a need to improve global rapid response mechanisms that are effectively coordinated and capable of providing efficient and effective coordination structures and support.

3. It is important to have a proactive approach to holding joint trainings, setting up logistics arrangements for civil-military coordination and ensuring the readiness of deployable teams and military and civil defence assets. Joint training is critical to enhance the knowledge of civilian and military actors in each other's roles and responsibilities, for example, through Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs civil-military coordination courses. It is also critical to hold simulation exercises at a level that allows for real engagement with and between deployable teams and troops.

4. Pre-disaster and continuous civil-military coordination and cooperation help to better plan for and respond when an emergency strikes. The early establishment of civil-military coordination structures and mechanisms upon deployment to an emergency situation helps with the overall response effectiveness. It is also important to ensure that it is clear to all stakeholders who are the focal points for civil-military coordination and cooperation in the specific response/mission.

5. It must be ensured that civil-military coordination includes coordination with urban search and rescue teams

6. Building resilience of communities and preparedness to deal with emergencies is vital.

7. It is necessary that Member States and humanitarian organizations, most notably the United Nations, the International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies and non-governmental organizations, coordinate their work and coordinate with the military to achieve successful outcomes in response to natural disasters.

8. It is critical to respect humanitarian principles, as well as the sovereignty of the affected State when deploying a response team and carrying out civil-military coordination. Also important is to bear in mind that military defence assets are to be used as a last resort in humanitarian response and that they are best used to meet a unique need with a specific capability, during a limited period of time, that cannot be fulfilled by civilian humanitarian organizations.

9. The development of country- and situation-specific civil-military coordination guidelines helps to tailor how coordination is to be done, from cooperation to coexistence, according to the operational context.

10. Building resilience and reducing disaster risk is seen as key. Other key points in terms of preparedness and response are the creation of a pool of civil defence and military experts in disaster response, the establishment of centres for excellence in countries that have the capacity to help coordinate regional response and the creation of synergies between those able to prepare for and respond to critical emergencies and needs.

11. The establishment of a regional civil-military centre for excellence in Qatar will help to promote civil-military coordination in times of natural disasters. A working group has been created to help establish the centre. Qatar also aims to establish strong regional partnerships and to improve coordination with all existing civil-military centres for excellence in order to join forces and make the best use of existing resources. There is a need to revise and improve the recommendations that came out of the First International HOPEFOR Conference, held in Doha in 2011, including supporting the establishment of a more robust and effective humanitarian aid system.

12. The Third International HOPEFOR Conference will be held in the Dominican Republic in 2013, with the support of the President of the Republic, where the sharing of lessons learned will be fostered. It is also foreseen to establish a centre for excellence in the region.

Panel 2: civil-military cooperation and/or coordination on the preparedness phase to natural disasters

Main outcomes and recommendations

1. All panellists agreed that training, interactive dialogue and joint exercises are key preparedness measures to ensure appropriate coordination in responding to natural disasters.

2. A holistic approach is necessary to be better prepared to respond to disasters. Focusing on preparedness requires the development of a risk reduction strategy. This strategy should focus on capacity-building and risk mitigation through appropriate training and public awareness, comprehensive assessment of the potential risks and an efficient emergency information management system.

3. Minimum standards, standard operating procedures, training and joint field exercises are key preparedness measures to ensure a coordinated response when disaster strikes. Joint field exercises involving civilian and military actors are essential to test international cooperation, cross-border procedures, the application of international guidelines and coordination.

4. There is a wide range of tasks that can be implemented by the military to respond to natural disasters. In order to be better prepared, there is a need for civilian and military actors to be aware of each other's capabilities and gaps.

5. Preparedness needs to be pursued at the national and regional levels and within a legal framework. As an example, in Latin America, countries are developing a protocol to request assistance to neighbouring countries. The protocol, signed by all the Ministries of Defence of the area, would allow an enhanced cooperation mechanism to respond to natural disasters.

6. Training, policy development, advocacy and liaison are key elements in terms of preparedness to ensure an appropriate response to natural disasters. The recognition of the Oslo Guidelines by all stakeholders is essential for the development of context-specific guidelines tailored to a particular situation. As natural disasters may also occur in a complex emergency or insecure environment, developing context-specific guidelines appears to be a key preparedness measure.

7. As illustrated by the HOPEFOR initiative, regional civil-military centres are key to ensure a coordinated "neighbour helping neighbour" approach. Based on a close collaboration with regional and international actors, such as the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, the development of such centres will ensure capacity-building at the national and regional levels and the strengthening of existing regional centres.

8. A timely response to national disasters requires pre-existing mechanisms, such as civil protection structures and organizations.

9. A participatory and horizontal approach is necessary in terms of preparedness. Affected populations should be involved in the capacity-building component of the preparedness phase.

10. Discussions highlighted the fact that militaries can valuably contribute to humanitarian action through their ability to rapidly mobilize and deploy unique assets and expertise in response to specifically identified requirements. However, the principle of "last resort" should be applied when using foreign military assets, ensuring that these assets complement civilian capabilities and are requested when they help meet the requirement and provide unique advantages in terms of capability, availability and timeliness.

Panel 3: effective coordination of civil-military assets at the regional and international levels

Main outcomes and recommendations

1. A good understanding of civil-military coordination and cooperation guidelines, principles and concepts, as well as of the different roles and mandates of civilians and the military, is paramount.

2. Recommendations for better civil-military coordination at the regional level include: (a) common training, through workshops and exercise simulations; (b) appointing civil-military coordination focal points at the Government and local authority level; (c) building local capacities to respond to emergencies; and (d) establishing regional civil-military centres for excellence.

3. Recommendations for furthering the HOPEFOR initiative included: (a) including principles and concepts of the Oslo Guidelines in national legislations; (b) sharing lessons learned and best practices and institutionalizing them, including through the creation of civil-military centres for excellence; (c) creating regional trained and rostered capacity for civil-military coordination to shorten the timespan needed to deploy civilian and military response teams; and (d) simulating regional civil-military coordination and cooperation, including to facilitate the response to a particular emergency and the deployment of emergency response teams to the affected State(s).

4. Challenges to civil-military coordination include the need to improve coordination mechanisms and the increasingly complex operational context.

5. Better coordination is needed at all levels, as is independence from political and institutional concerns and giving priority to alleviating human suffering when responding to natural disasters and emergencies.

6. Attention must be given to the issues of security and humanitarian space when conducting civil-military coordination and cooperation.

7. Ensuring the participation of the military in coordination mechanisms, where appropriate, can help to avoid duplication of efforts and lack of communication and coordination between civilian-humanitarian and military actors, and to make the best possible use of existing resources, expertise and assets.

8. Coordination between foreign organizations and local authorities and between national and international military, is critical for an effective response.

9. Investment in training and building local capacity for emergency response in a proactive rather than reactive manner, coupled with contingency planning and early coordination and cooperation, can greatly improve the outcome and success of the response.

10. It has been demonstrated through an academic perspective that information management is key to guaranteeing a coordinated response to humanitarian crisis. It was suggested that cluster leads act as information hubs in order to ensure that the civilian or military response meets the needs through an appropriate dispatch of information. Standardization of information exchanges, professionalization of the humanitarian sector, promotion of a constant dialogue and joint planning were recommended to favour effective coordination of civil-military assets.

11. Lessons learned constitute an important part of exchange of information. However, experience shows that lessons learned are not shared sufficiently, which leads to their repetition in cases of natural disasters.

12. The earthquake that struck Pakistan in 2005 illustrated the need to have a trained and effective national disaster management system to serve as a coordinating platform, including civil-military coordination.

13. Experience from the earthquake that struck Haiti in 2010 showed the importance of the deployment of liaison officers and joint civil-military assessment team(s) at the very onset of a crisis. The existence of civil-military coordination guidelines in national policies is key to facilitating the decision-making process for an efficient and rapid response.

14. In disaster-prone areas, there is a need to strengthen coordination with regional partners in preparedness and response phases. Developing common strategies and plans, improving information-sharing and management are essential to ensure a coordinated response at the regional level.

15. Participants discussed the issue of standards in humanitarian response. Standards do exist, such as those of the Sphere Project, and there was general agreement that there was a need to ensure their implementation when disaster strikes.

16. Using military assets to ensure security in the aftermath of a disaster was identified as a potential request in terms of civil-military coordination. Panellists agreed on the fact that security is the responsibility of the affected Government.